

File

Address by Stansfield Turner
Director of Central Intelligence
to the USNA Class of 1947
Thursday, 13 November 1980

It seemed appropriate to describe to you how one of your own friends and classmates can change your life. It all started for me on the 2nd of February 1977; I was sitting peacefully in my office in Naples minding my military naval business over there. The phone rang and it was the new Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, whom I did not know. He said, "the President would like to see you tomorrow in Washington." I said that is nice. He said, "I can't tell you what it is all about." So, I hung up the phone, called in my aide and said would you get me on the next plane to Washington. I then asked the Chief of Staff and my closest advisors to come and and said, "Troops, the boss sent for me tomorrow; I don't know what it is about, but let's war game this thing--I don't know if I am being called in for an interview to see how I stack up with other people; let's see what should my answers be, if he is going to tell me to do something--in which case what should my answers be, etc."

We went through various military possibilities--the Chief of Staff said well, you know Sorenson just flunked the course for CIA--I said, oh my God, what do I say if he offers that to me. The Chief of Staff looked back at me and said, "Stan, he wouldn't do that to you." We skipped the answer to that question and war gamed the rest of it. The aide came running back in and said if we work hard we can just catch the Concorde out of Paris tonight and but ^{is} of course it/against all the government rules to take a foreign airlines. I said, Butch, no President has ever sent for me before--let's go first class. Some of you may know a fellow out of '43 named Dave Bagley; he had just arrived in Naples in a Navy jet; my aide commandeered his jet, flew us to Paris, walked on board the Concorde the minute they opened the door and I arrived here at Dulles Airport 8 hours and 45 minutes from talking to Harold Brown.

I got up the next morning and went to see Harold Brown; I got an appointment with him but I was a little concerned because I noticed the appointment they gave me was 30 minutes before I was due in the Oval Office; trying to get across the river and all that and then maybe 10 or 15 minutes with Harold Brown, whom I did not know. As I walked in to see him, he said sir it is nice to meet you but the President has got something he wants to ask you to do and he'll tell you about it. I said oh, okay. I'm pretty thick at times, but as I got in the car going across the river I said to myself--you know, if the Secretary of Defense, whom I don't know, doesn't want to meet me and get to know me, you know, I'm not going to a military assignment. So, I thought about the Chief of Staff's remarks and I had about ten minutes to conjure up what my answer would be.

Well, I walked into the Oval Office; here was our classmate, very, very warm and friendly, and ah, I don't know, well, I.... He has remained a very warm and friendly person throughout the tremendous responsibility given him these last four years; but he was very warm to me and took me into his private office with the Vice President; sat down and all of a sudden I found myself pretty dazzled, as a matter of fact, but I was being lectured by the President of the United States about what I great guy I was and at the end of it came the CIA punchline. Well, I looked back at him and said, "Mr. President, if I really do have the capabilities and qualities you have been so generous describing, I could do you a lot more good in the military because you need those certain qualities there--I'd like to stay where I am. Well, it really was an interesting experience in retrospect but I just sat there and I kept hearing him say, CIA. I was sort of dazed, you know, but all I could tell that was coming through that he wasn't changing his mind. I finally said to myself, this next two or three minutes is the last chance you have to drive any kind of a bargain in

this deal. He said, you know I want you to run the whole intelligence community, not just the CIA--that's what your job is. So I finally said Mr. President I don't think there is enough authority for anybody to run the intelligence community. I didn't know beans about the job of intelligence. He said well, you're in charge of the budget committee for intelligence. I said, Mr. President, being in charge of a committee in this city gets you absolutely nowhere. Six months later I had charge of the budget.

I walked out in a real daze because I could sort of see those thirty-some years of naval career just sort of going across the screen there but that just wasn't going to use them, build on them, but you know, each of us in our own walk of life, those of you in the Navy, etc., you develop a concept of ambitions, desires, what you want to do for the organization, company or whatever it is. I, of course, had those up the kazoo, and I'd come on that airplane thinking about what I was going to tell the boss I would do when I got the chance. But now I saw all that going down the drain and some new challenge coming up.

Well, what does it mean. What's it been like? What did our classmate throw me into? I think the first thing that strikes me in retrospect is the depth of antagonism toward CIA that I found in the country, the media of course, at that time and it really did take me by surprise, clearly. I knew CIA wasn't popular, but the degree of animosity, the degree of irrationality total inability to get the press to understand/^{what}the absolute necessity of the kinds of secret activities we have to do was quite a change from the--you know we were pilloried in the military for a while during Vietnam, but really nothing ^{this} of/took on and meant that I felt a great responsibility and made a great effort, and frankly, tried to put my own personal reputation on the line to rehabilitate

the Agency's name and reputation, because it really was important for the country.

A second characteristic of what I found was that the CIA is very like the Navy; very like the military. It's most responsive. A little anecdote. You know when you out to a public place to speak and you have the podium. Some are high, some are low and I like to be able to look at my notes without having to spend time looking down. So I asked the Agency one time-- I said look fellows, I want a little gadget, sort of like a moveable parallellogram-- you know those things we used with our navigation--so that I can get up to the podium and I can slide my paper up as high as I can get it--you see what I mean. Just build me a little something. In two weeks I had a kit. I couldn't even carry it. It was machine-tooled. I never even used it. It was so complex the point will put that paper anywhere you want. I stopped asking for many things after that. But they really are responsive; they're dedicated. And I would say they are at the Agency, the ^{single}most talented group of public servants in our country. I really think man-for-man, woman-for-woman, they have really got quality of people there, It's wonderful in that respect to work with them.

But, I'd found our classmate had thrown me into something that was quite different than the Navy. CIA had grown. It's a very young organization--it had grown out of the OSS and it really was disorganized. It didn't have a management sense. It was running the fifty-yard dash, only now we were working on a long distance run. We were old enough and we had to be able to do the long distance and we hadn't prepared the management foundations for a continuing operation. We were living off the fat of super people who had come in in the past and we didn't have a personnel management system that was sure we brought in the right, best young talent at the bottom; then we challenge them adequately

adapted to the morays of the youth today who want to be challenged differently than you and I wanted to be challenged in '46 and ensure that everybody in the Agency thought he had an opportunity to use his talents; and we've done a great deal in the last three and a half years. The great help I've had from the wonderful deputy I was lucky to get, Frank Carlucci, former Ambassador and and former Deputy at HEW, and we've instituted a much more systematic, centralized personnel management system.

The other big difference, but not entirely difference from the Navy, was CIA has been three, very decentralized operations. We have the spy department, we have human spies, we have a technical spy department with satellites, photographs, signals, other equipment, the kind of places that invented the U-2 and then we have an analytic department that tries to take a product from all these and bring it together. But, because of the inherent and the importance of secrecy in an organization like this, particularly in the human spy department, there was very little communication between these three and you can't really tolerate that today. You can't go out because you're a spy and get something at great risk that you could get with a photograph. You've got to be working together, talking together. You can't have analysts wanting to know what the grain harvest in Poland is going to be this year when the grain harvest people are analyzing what it's going to be in the Ukraine. I'm just trying to make things up, but you've got to really be tied together and the decentralization was worse from the Navy's submarines, aviation and destroyers, much worse. And that's a fact. But we've worked a lot on trying to bring the management together. I deal with the subordinates there as a corporation now. I deal with them as the top of these departments and a couple of others who are

managers as a team, as a committee, as a group. (Inaudible)...I'm making the decisions but it used to be they were dealt with individually by the Director and things were isolated from each other. And if the Agency made mistakes, and it did make some mistakes--not nearly as many (inaudible), it was not because people were dumb or foolish, or malicious, it was because it was so compartmented that a fellow who was overzealous did more than he could legally do, or should have done, to get away with it because there wasn't enough check and balance. You can certainly go too far in the other direction because if you proliferate this very sensitive information too far, obviously you're going to have leaks and problems. So we're trying to find that compromise between a corporate decisionmaking structure, with some compartmentation within it--they don't all need to know everything that we are doing in the innermost detail, but enough so we get a check and a balance on each other. So we've made a lot of progress there and it's been an interesting challenge.

I mentioned that the President asked me to run the Community--which is statutorily and had been since 1947, a second job for the head of the CIA. Entirely separate, to bring together the Defense Intelligence, the State Department intelligence, the National Security Agency and so on. Boy I tell you, when the boss threw me into this one, I was a buzz saw. First of all, he said, "Now take charge of this place." Well, a few Directors had tried it a little bit, but not very much and a few Presidents had walked right up to the brink of giving the Director more authority. Jimmy walked up to the brink and he gave me the budget authority I mentioned and gave me one additional authority over what we call tasking--telling the people who collect intelligence what they are to collect on and what their priorities are. But he didn't go all the way and give me the full authorities you really would have to have to run it

like you'd run a ship. And trying to ease some of that authority and power away from the barons who run these other organizations is no easy task. Now, on top of that, look at the position that I'm in. If I'm going to get the Agency, the CIA running loyally and enthusiastically behind me I've got to be their advocate out in front. If I'm going to run the Community and get all those barons to cooperate and work under my direction as a team, I've got to be seen not to be an advocate of the CIA. So, it is a far different situation than being in the military in this respect where you have broader, cleaner lines of command. I don't want to overstate that because there are a lot of problems and contradictions there, too, but I think this is a very difficult and unusual situation where you try to be things to two different constituencies at the same time when there is so much conflict between them. I am pleased, however, because there is good will in all these organizations and I don't want to overstate the degree of distance and problems, but there has been real progress in bringing our Community together and there is a large climate of opinion within the Community that we need to work together better and I think a lot of progress has been made in that direction. But, all I'm saying is when our classmate picked me up and threw me into this pool of alligators, I didn't quite appreciate these problems of public antagonism and the need to restructure the Central Intelligence Agency for the long haul in terms of its management procedures and the difficulty in playing both of the roles that he gave me.

Let me wind up by saying that I'll be eternally grateful to him for having put this confidence in me and having supported me thoroughly during the four years and for having let me have this opportunity to serve the country with expanded horizons with a whole different perspective that I never would have

had if I had stayed in the Navy. I miss the Navy; I regret not being able to complete some of the things I had hoped to have completed there, but this has been as challenging, exciting and rewarding as anybody could possibly ask for and I am grateful to Jimmy Carter for making it available and for his leadership during these four years. It will go down of course, the Presidency, to be judged by history and all of us have different opinions of it today. Let me assure you that I have watched him first-hand, watched him very closely and the one thing that you ought to give him real credit for is that he is an honest and upright and dedicated a man as anyone knows. He has tackled tough ones; hasn't won them all; in retrospect people will say Jimmy Carter shouldn't have tackled this or that and should have tackled another one, but he sure has given it a try. We can be proud of him and proud of our class and let's look to Jerry to carry the flag on in the future.